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CENTER FOR THE AMERICAN WOMAN AND POLITICS
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fact sheet

WOMEN IN MUNICIPAL OFFICE

In 1985, in the states for which data are available,[1] women comprised 14.3% of mayors and municipal council members. There were 14,672 women elected to these posts out of a total of 102,329 officials. This represents a 260% increase over 1975, when women held only 4,080 such positions.

The highest percentages of women elected to municipal office were found in the District of Columbia (50%) and Hawaii (30%), each of which has only one incorporated municipality.[2] Of the states with a substantial number of available positions, Michigan ranked highest with 27.5% women among its elected municipal officials.[3]

After the District of Columbia and Hawaii, the ten states with the highest proportions of women in municipal office (mayors and council members combined) were:

Michigan	27.5%	Wyoming	17.8%
Alaska	23.1%	California	17.8%
Oregon	22.2%	Arizona	17.6%
Washington	19.3%	Delaware	17.5%
Connecticut	18.7%	Ohio	16.5%

Five of these states rank among the top ten in the proportion of women in their state legislatures, while four rank among the top ten in the proportion of women on county governing boards.[4]

State	% of Women State Legislators	Rank	State	% of Women on County Governing Boards	Rank
WY	25.6	3	AK	36.5	1
WA	23.8	5	HI	24.0	2
CT	21.9	7	CA	21.6	3
AZ	20.0	8	AZ	20.9	4
OR	20.0	9			

According to the Joint Center for Political Studies, 35 black women nationwide were mayors in 1985, constituting 12.2% of all black mayors. Black women held 410 municipal council seats in 1985, 18.7% of all seats held by black officials. This is more than four times the 1975 figure of 4%. However, black elected municipal officials hold only a tiny proportion of all municipal offices, so black women constitute less than 1% of all elected municipal positions.[5]

As of November 30, 1985, 85 women were mayors of cities with populations over 30,000 (almost 10% of all such mayors). As of mid-1986, five of the 100 largest cities in the nation had women mayors: Houston, TX (Kathy Whitmire, D); Sacramento, CA (Anne Rudin, D); San Diego, CA (Maureen F. O'Connor, D); San Francisco, CA (Dianne Feinstein, D); and Toledo, OH (Donna Owens, R).

Other cities among the 100 largest which have elected women mayors include:

Austin, TX	Carole McClellan (D)	1977-1983
Chicago, IL	Jane Byrne (D)	1979-1983
Hartford, CT	Ann Uccello (R)	1967-1971
Honolulu, HI	Eileen Anderson (D)	1981-1985
Huntington Beach, CA	Norma B. Gibbs (R)	1975-1976
	Ruth Bailey (R)	1984-1985
Lincoln, NE	Helen Boosalis (D)	1975-1983
Long Beach, CA	Eunice Sato (R)	1980-1982
Oklahoma City, OK	Patience Latting (D)	1971-1983
Phoenix, AZ	Margaret Hance (R)	1974-76,78-80
Portland, OR	Dorothy Lee (R)	1949-1952
St. Petersburg, FL	Corinne Freeman (R)	1978-1985
San Antonio, TX	Lila Cockrell (D)	1975-1981
San Jose, CA	Janet Gray Hayes (D)	1974-1982
Worcester, MA	Sara Robertson (D)	1982-1983

The first woman mayor in the United States was Susanna Salter of Argonia, KS, elected in 1887. Seattle, WA, was the first major city to elect a woman mayor; Bertha K. Landes, elected in 1926 after serving as president of the city council and acting mayor, launched a vigorous campaign against bootlegging as one of her first official acts. The largest U.S. city yet to have a female mayor is Chicago, IL, where Jane Byrne (D) served from 1979-1983.

During 1981 and 1982, Mayor Helen Boosalis of Lincoln, NE was president of the U.S. Conference of Mayors. She was the first woman to preside over that organization, which includes the mayors of most U.S. cities with populations over 30,000.

Loretta Glickman was chosen as mayor of Pasadena, CA in 1982. She was the first black woman to head a city with a population over 100,000.

Among the 25 women serving in the U.S. Congress in 1986 (two in the Senate and 23 in the House) four were on municipal councils before reaching their current positions. They are: Barbara Kennelly (D-CT); Jan Meyers (R-KS); Barbara Mikulski (D-MD); and Mary Rose Oakar (D-OH).

Data from a 1981 Center for the American Woman and Politics survey of women in elected office show that:

- Women mayors and council members are most frequently between the ages of 40 and 59.
- More than half of all women mayors and council members hold jobs outside of the home while in office.
- Most women mayors and council members who list occupations outside the home are in professional/technical or clerical/secretarial fields. More than 10% of the women municipal officials are elementary or secondary school teachers, by far the most common single occupation listed by the women.
- More than half of all women mayors and council members have had at least some college education.
- More than 3/4 of all women mayors and council members are currently married, and of those, almost all report that their husbands are supportive of their political careers.
- Fewer than half of all women mayors and council members have children younger than 12 years old.

NOTES

[1]Complete data are not available for the following states: IL; IN; KY; MO; PA; WI.

[2]Other states with fewer than 100 incorporated municipalities include: NV, 17; RI, 39; DE, 56; AZ, 76; WY, 91; NM, 96.

[3]Michigan is the only state in which clerks and treasurers are included in these figures. They are elected ex officio to the councils and vote on policy matters before those bodies.

[4]There is no county commissioner equivalent in CT, VT, or RI.

[5]Because different data collection methods are used and different states are included in CAWP and Joint Center figures, it is not possible to calculate the percentage of all female municipal officials who are black.

Sources: National Information Bank on Women in Public Office, a project of the Information Services Program of the Center for the American Woman and Politics. Also: CAWP research on "Bringing More Women into Public Office," conducted under a grant from the Charles H. Revson Foundation; U.S. Census Bureau; state and local directories; Joint Center for Political Studies; National Women's Political Caucus; U.S. Conference of Mayors; Women in American Politics by Martin Gruberg (Academia Press, Oshkosh, WI, 1968).

Further technical information on this data is available from CAWP.

State	Number of Women Mayors and Municipal Council Members		Percentage of Women (Rank Among States)		Percentage Increase from 1975 to 1985
	1975	1985	1985		
AL	85	281	11.0	(33)	230
AK	35	233	23.1	(2)	566
AZ	39	87	17.6	(8)	123
AR	160	365	11.9	(28)	128
CA	220	465	17.8	(7)	111
CO	170	315	16.5	(11)	85
CT	130	240	18.7	(5)	85
DE	22	57	17.5	(9)	159
DC	3	7	50.0	(*)	*
FL	174	311	13.3	(19)	19
GA	77	251	7.8	(40)	226
HI	1	3	30.0	(*)	*
ID	45	141	13.2	(21)	213
IL	----------	----------	------- NA	------	----------
IN	----------	----------	------- NA	------	----------
IA	304	732	12.9	(22)	141
KS	165	445	11.9	(29)	170
KY	----------	----------	------- NA	------	----------
LA	65	183	11.7	(30)	182
ME	87	243	10.4	(36)	179
MD	59	133	15.2	(14)	125
MA	48	217	11.3	(32)	352
MI	*	2,779	27.5	(1)	*
MN	227	542	12.8	(25)	139
MS	82	176	10.5	(35)	115
MO	----------	----------	------- NA	------	----------
MT	57	110	14.4	(15)	93
NE	83	241	7.6	(41)	190
NV	2	15	16.1	(13)	*
NH	39	113	10.7	(34)	190
NJ	213	451	13.2	(20)	112
NM	33	86	16.3	(12)	161
NY	*	797	14.4	(17)	*
NC	141	337	12.2	(26)	139
ND	69	174	8.5	(39)	152
OH	*	1,129	16.5	(10)	*
OK	92	312	10.2	(37)	239
OR	175	344	22.2	(3)	97
PA	----------	----------	------- NA	------	----------
RI	21	30	12.8	(24)	43
SC	72	184	12.2	(27)	156
SD	50	149	8.9	(38)	198
TN	50	144	7.1	(42)	188
TX	277	786	12.8	(23)	184
UT	40	137	11.5	(31)	243
VT	44	87	6.3	(43)	98
VA	117	211	13.3	(18)	80
WA	153	341	19.3	(4)	123
WV	120	202	13.6	(16)	68
WI	----------	----------	------- NA	------	----------
WY	34	86	17.8	(6)	153
NATIONAL	**4,080**	**14,672**	**14.3**		**260%**

*N is too small or 1975 and 1985 data are based on different assumptions so comparisons are invalid.

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